

***NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service Weekly  
Statewide Influenza Activity Summary***

**Week Ending December 17, 2004**

**Influenza level of activity:                   “SPORADIC ACTIVITY”**

Influenza testing performed in New Jersey by:

- The Public Health and Environmental Laboratories (PHEL)
- The WHO and NREVSS (National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System) Laboratories from November 1, 2004 to present:
  - Number of influenza A culture confirmed case: One
  - Number of influenza B culture confirmed case: None

New Jersey's influenza level of activity remains at **“SPORADIC ACTIVITY”** this week. Two weeks ago, the two laboratories listed above reported a culture-confirmed influenza A isolate from a specimen taken from an ambulatory patient on November 24, 2004. That resulted in the raising of the influenza level of activity in the state of New Jersey to sporadic. The level remains the same this week, since the NJDHSS Communicable Disease service (CDS) did not receive any additional culture-confirmed isolates, or reports of influenza outbreaks in any of the long-term care or healthcare facilities in any part of the state.

ILI reports from long-term care facilities since the season began remain in the 1.05% to 1.63% range. Rates of school absenteeism also remain stable, while emergency department reports show a slight increase. Hospital laboratory surveillance for respiratory syncytial virus (often clinically indistinguishable from influenza virus infection) shows significant increase in the number of tests performed and the number of positive results. This increased activity is expected as we move further into the season.

Overall for the past three weeks, the surveillance parameters are still within the same baseline when compared with the same period last season. Though some of the county percentage parameters showed figures well above the total average (see 17Dec04Pdf table), these figures should not be interpreted as an increased level of activity since the denominator is very small.

According to the CDC nationwide flu report for week 48 (week ending December 4, 2004), influenza activity in the United States remains low for a second week in a row. Two states and New York City reported regional influenza activity, four states reported local activity, while 36 states, the District of Columbia and New Jersey reported sporadic influenza activity. Nine states reported no activity. These activity levels were based upon laboratory culture-confirmed cases, and the CDC has antigenically characterized 36 influenza viruses collected since October 1, 2004 by some laboratories in the U.S. Twenty-six were influenza A (H3N2) and ten were influenza B viruses. These isolates were characterized as A/Fujian/411/2002-like (H3N2), and B/Shanghai/361/2002-like, which were the influenza A and B components recommended for the 2004-05-influenza vaccine.

Influenza virus infection itself is not a clinical or laboratory reportable disease according to N.J.A.C. 8:57. Accordingly, activity levels must be extrapolated from weekly monitoring activities of healthcare facilities and providers dispersed around the state.

NJDHSS continues to make progress in making vaccine available to high priority individuals in the state. The plan to allocate the 81,000 doses of adult vaccine in January 2005 will be finalized within the next few weeks. Decisions are being based on the information provided by practitioners to local health departments, as well as the information provided to NJDHSS from other providers in the state.

Currently the NJDHSS has several hundred doses of Flu Mist available for distribution to eligible healthcare workers who provide direct care to patients. Those interested in obtaining this vaccine for free should contact the Immunization Program at (609)-588-7520.

In addition, approximately 39,000 doses of preservative –free vaccine licensed for use in children 6-35 months of age, has been made available for purchase by practitioners who care for children. Only about 5,000 doses have been ordered to date, and NJDHSS has asked Aventis Pasteur (through the CDC) to assist in reaching out to customers normally serviced by Aventis Pasteur.

**References and Resources:**

- <http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/preventflu.shtml>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>